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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains steps that will help the vocational student to acquire some letter writing skills quickly, the result of which will be the student's own personal letter to a legislator. Background information discusses the need for State or Federal financial support for vocational education and students' role in informing legislators about their concern for vocational education. A seven-step procedure for writing a letter to a legislator is outlined. Sample materials to aid in producing a letter by following those steps are then provided. These include a model letter, a guided letter form, and samples of opening, middle, and closing paragraphs. (YLB)

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THE
VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' GUIDE
TO
WRITING A LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

by

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KEEPING VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS ALIVE IN SARASOTA

Sarasota County is a fine community that has a great deal to offer its residents. Being able to attend a first-rate vocational program is one of the opportunities available.

Whether or not a vocational training program will exist in a particular area is determined by two factors, the needs of the community and the degree of state and federal financial support allotted for it. If the community has need of many workers who must have specialized training in a particular field or trade, then there is a definite need for a vocational program that will provide this training. However, a vocational program cannot survive without some degree of financial support from the state and federal governments.

In some communities, vocational programs have been closed or reduced in staff because of "cuts" in funding. The residents in these communities are either denied training in some fields or are offered a poorer quality of teaching due to the staff reductions. Having fewer teachers usually means a higher ratio of students per teacher; and under these circumstances, the teachers are unable to provide adequate personal guidance for each student.

Here in Sarasota County we are fortunate that we are able to offer a wide variety of vocational training programs that meet the needs of our community. You are a witness to this fact because you have attended and are probably about to complete such a training program.

You undoubtedly want to think that these programs, including yours, will continue to be available for others in the near future. What can you do to insure that they will be?

WRITING LETTERS TO LEGISLATORS

You can write a letter to a legislator to let him or her know how you feel about vocational programs in Sarasota County. The legislators are the lawmakers who make the decisions that affect our lives, and they have the influence to make a big difference in the caliber of vocational education.

Some legislators support vocational education and some do not. The main factor that determines a legislator's stand on an issue is the feeling of the majority of his or her constituents (the people in the town, city, or state whom the legislator represents). The legislators who represent you are interested in your views concerning issues that affect Sarasota County. If you feel strongly that you received good training in your vocational program and you are grateful for this training, write a letter to a legislator and let him or her know it.

Letter-writing is a simple device that is often taken for granted but, actually, it is a democratic right that gives you the chance to express your views to your appointed officials, and your views can possible affect the course of events that are happening. Letters help legislators measure their constituents' reactions to public issues, and these letters could be a powerful force that helps to determine legislative action. The greater the number of letters

expressing the same view, the greater the influential power.

Letters that express your views are important even when there is no pressing need for legislative action. By simply informing a legislator of your success in a vocational program, he or she will be made aware of something good happening in our county, and it will create a happy feeling. It would be considered a pleasant letter, one that has no complaints and makes no demands but just says, I'm happy that I learned some job skills in a good training program." Your legislators represent you, and they are interested in what is happening in your life.

LETTER WRITING SKILLS

So now you are probably thinking, "All that sounds great but I'm not a good letter-writer", or "It's been a long time since I've written a formal letter." Well, let's face it! Some people are not accustomed to writing letters. Perhaps you fall into this category. If so, you will find this booklet most helpful. It contains steps that will help you to quickly acquire some letter-writing skills, and the result will be your own personal letter to a legislator. Simply follow the directions step-by-step. They begin on the following page.

SEVEN STEPS IN WRITING A LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

Step #1. STUDY MODEL LETTER. Read the model letter on page 5. Notice the heading for each part.

Step #2. DETERMINE APPROPRIATE LEGISLATORS. A recent list of the legislators that represent you should be enclosed in this booklet. Your instructor will help you decide which ones should receive letters.

Step #3. USE GUIDED LETTER FORM. Tear-out the letter form on page 6. Use it as you follow Steps #4, #5, and #6 in writing your letter. It will guide you to place the parts in the proper places.

Step #4. WRITE OPENING PARAGRAPH. State that you are in a vocational program and you want to express your views about it. You can use one of the samples of opening paragraphs on page 7.

Step #5. WRITE MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS. Relate some interesting facts about the program and why you think the training was worthwhile. Samples of middle paragraphs are on pages 8 and 9.

Step #6. WRITE CLOSING PARAGRAPH. Ask the legislator to support vocational programs so they will continue to be available. You can use one of the closing paragraphs on page 10.

Step #7. TYPE OR REWRITE LETTER. Type or have someone else type your letter or simply rewrite it.

Address of Sender

472 Luckee Avenue
Sarasota, FL 32000

Date Line

June 4, 1985

Inside Address

The Honorable Ben A. Showmann
House of Representatives
926 House Office Building
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Salutation

Dear Representative or Senator Showmann:

Body of the Letter

I am a student in the ---------- Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center, and I want to let you know how I feel about the excellent training I am receiving.

When I first arrived at the Vocational Center, I was nervous because I was not sure I could succeed in a vocational program. As a person out of school for a long time, I was afraid that I would not be able to keep up with the other students. However, it turned out to be a positive period in my life.

In the ---------- Program, I learned many ------- skills, and my success at acquiring these skills has given me a confidence I didn't have upon entering. I am no longer afraid or uncertain of my abilities. In fact, I will soon be leaving the------Program and beginning a new job where I feel sure I will do well because I am well trained. All this is possible for me because of the vocational education I received in Sarasota County.

It is my understanding that vocational programs like the one I am attending rely upon state and federal financial support. If so, I sincerely hope that you will give your support on a legislative level. In this way, you will be doing your part to help people like me become useful, productive, independent, and happier citizens.

Closing

Sincerely,

Signature

Gary Grateful

Gary Grateful

RETURN ADDRESS

STREET ADDRESS_____
CITY, STATE, ZIP_____
DATE_____

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_____ (INSIDE ADDRESS)
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CLOSING_____

SIGNATURE_____

S A M P L E S

OPENING PARAGRAPHS FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

I am a student in the _____ Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical CENTER, and I want to let you know how I feel about the excellent training I am receiving (I have received).

As a student nearing completion of the _____Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center, I wish to inform you of my views concerning this excellent program. I think you, as a legislator, will want to be aware of my appreciation for having this training available for me in Sarasota.

As a resident of Sarasota, I wish to inform you of my views concerning the fine _____ Program offered at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center. I have been a student in the program for the past year, and I have acquired some good skills that will help me to obtain and maintain a good job.

This letter is to let you know how I feel about the _____ Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center. As a student and soon-to-be graduate of the program, I think you should be aware of my appreciation for having this training available in Sarasota County.

I am a student in the _____ Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center, and I would like to share my views with you concerning the fine training offered here.

This letter is in reference to the _____Program offered at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center. As a student, I should like to express my thoughts concerning the effectiveness of the program.

I am happy to be able to state that I will soon complete the _____ _____Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center. This letter is to thank you for your part in supporting vocational programs like this one.

I have been informed that vocational education may be in trouble due to a lack of state and federal funds. As a student in a vocational program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center, I'm writing to let you know how important this type of training is to people like me.

The _____ Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center has made (is making) a big difference in my life, and I hope it will continue to operate and to train others to also plan for productive lives.

My concern is great for the survival of vocational training programs, and I am sure that you are interested in my viewpoints as a student. I have been fortunate in acquiring skills in the _____ Program at the Sarasota County Vocational Technical Center but I fear that this same opportunity will not always be available for other individuals.

S A M P L E S

MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

The reason I decided to enter a vocational program was because I wanted to acquire some skills that would help me get a good job. It was a good decision on my part.

I liked the method of teaching because I was able to learn the skills at my own pace but the teacher/instructor was always there to help me when assistance was needed. I also liked the "hands on" part which allowed me to learn "by doing". I learn best this way. While attending the _____ Program, I can honestly say that for the first time in my schooling years, I actually enjoyed going to school.

I am also pleased with the skills I have learned. I can now_____ _____ _____. These skills will soon help me get a job that will pay fairly good wages, and I feel sure that I will now be able to do all right in the working world.

I am_____ years old and about to complete the_____ Program. My training has included an understanding of_____ _____, and I can successfully demonstrate the skills necessary in this field. I feel confident that I can be an asset on a job, and I look forward to becoming employed.

My newly learned skills and my confidence have been made possible by the _____Program. I feel fortunate that this program was available for me, and I hope it will continue to be available for others, too.

I am proud of my new vocational skills because the SCVTC is noted for its excellent_____Program. The (teachers/instructors) were helpful and encouraging, and they provided the class with not only theory-learning but also a great deal of training in supervised (clinical settings/shop work). From my experiences with this training, I know I will enjoy working in this field. I am eager to be a part of a _____ group, and I am confident in my ability to be competent on a job.

The (teachers/instructors) are to be commended for providing the community with a really good training program. I feel fortunate that I was able to take advantage of it.

Although I have the academic ability to do well in college, I have always wanted to be a _____; and I was informed that the _____ Program at SCVTC was an excellent one that would prepare me well in this field. This information was correct because I am about to graduate from the _____Program, and I feel well qualified to be a competent _____.

The program was a very demanding one. My high academic ability was certainly needed to manage the enormous amount of studying and test-taking that was required but I feel proud to have succeeded in a program that maintains very high academic standards. The competencies required in the (clinical learning experiences/shop experiences) were also of a high caliber, and they enabled me to become a most skilled _____.

While I was in the program, I had to do a lot of book-learning to get information and knowledge about the job skills. Then I learned the basics in the training shop with a (teacher/instructor) always there to help me. After that, I had experience on actual job sites, and from this experience I feel I can do good work at a regular job.

I'm glad I completed this program. It was good for me to have it available in Sarasota County when I needed it.

I have always had trouble getting and keeping a job because I had no skills. Paying the bills at home was a problem. Then a friend talked me into going to the vocational center. There a guidance counselor spoke to me and helped me get into the _____ Program.

This move made a big change in my life. Before I couldn't do much of anything but now I am a skillful _____. Besides being good in the _____ trade, I also enjoy doing this type of work. Now the job placement specialist is helping to find the right job for me. Soon I'll be employed and making enough money to take care of all my bills.

When I first arrived at the vocational center, I was nervous because I was not sure I could succeed in a vocational program. As a (high school dropout/ displaced homemaker/foreign student/veteran/underachiever/handicapped person/ person out of school for a long time) I was afraid that I would not be able to keep up with the other students. However, it turned out to be a positive period in my life.

In the _____ Program, I learned many_____ skills, and my success at acquiring these skills has given me a confidence I didn't have upon entering. I am no longer afraid or uncertain of my abilities. In fact, I will soon be leaving the _____ Program and beginning a new job where I feel sure I will do well because I am well trained. All this is possible for me because of the vocational education I received in Sarasota County.

As a high school student, I have always been accustomed to the regular type of classroon school studies. Being a student in a vocational program was a new experience for me, and I really enjoyed the change.

The _____ Program made me see how learned skills could be put to use in real work situations. Now I understand why and how reading and math skills are needed for job-training, and my academic education has become more meaningful for me. I used to think that vocational education was just for slow learners but I discovered that vocational students have to have a lot of "smarts" to master the competencies required in their programs. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to be in a vocational program, and I am proud to be a vocational student.

S A M P L E S

CLOSING PARAGRAPHS FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

The purpose of vocational programs like _____ is to provide the training that will help people get good jobs. I have acquired job skills, and I hope other people will be able to do so, too. I urge you, as a legislator, to always support vocational education in Sarasota County.

I urge you to keep my comments in mind when you consider any measures relating to vocational programs in Sarasota County. These programs have my support, as a student and a resident; and I hope they have your support, as a legislator.

As a legislator, you have the power to help the vocational programs in Sarasota County. When any measures arise dealing with funds for vocational education, I hope you will remember my comments and give your full support.

It is my understanding that vocational programs like the one I am attending rely upon state and federal financial support. If so, I sincerely hope that you will give your support on a legislative level. In this way, you will be doing your part to help people like me become useful, productive, independent and happier citizens.

In your position as a legislator, you can be of great assistance to vocational programs in Sarasota County. If they ever need help or support in any way, I urge you to provide it. This program was a godsend to me.

Vocational programs like this one help people get the skills they need for good jobs. You can be most helpful by being a strong supporter of these programs. Then we can be sure they will always be available for people in Sarasota County.

Being in the _____ Program is one of the best things that ever happened to me. I hope you will always remember my comments and support programs like this one.

I thought you would like to know how a vocational student feels about the training received in Sarasota County. I sincerely hope you will always support vocational programs like the one I attended.

The reason I wrote this letter is to let you know how much I appreciate having this program available to me in Sarasota County. I hope it will always be available for others, too.

I wrote this letter so you would know how important this program was in my life. I appreciate the fact that Sarasota County made this program available for me.